

# *SAN ANTONIO Class Landing Assault Ship*

## *Discussion*

The operational flexibility and capability of the Amphibious Fleet will be significantly enhanced with the FY03 delivery of LPD-17, USS SAN ANTONIO, the first of twelve new landing assault ships to be procured by FY04. As a class, these ships will overcome amphibious lift shortfalls caused by the decommissioning of aging LPDs, LSTs, LKAs, and LSD-36s and help the Marine Corps to meet its requirement of 2.5 Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEB). These versatile ships will complement the LHD/LHA large deck amphibians with simultaneous wet-well and flight deck capabilities.

Each of the 25,000 ton ships will carry approximately 700 Marines, have a vehicle stowage capacity of 25,000 square feet, a well deck sized for two LCACs, and a flight deck capable of simultaneous operation of two CH-53E Super Stallions, two MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, or four CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters. The ship class will be outfitted with the Rolling Airframe Missile system for self-defense and will incorporate design features which present a significantly reduced radar cross section, compared to previous amphibious ships.

## *Marine Corps Position*

Maintaining projected delivery schedules and attaining operational readiness of this ship class is key to achieving a fiscally-constrained requirement of 2.5 MEB equivalents of amphibious lift. Ensuring that the ship maintains a robust C4I and self-defense capability as threat systems evolve is key to survivability in the littoral environment. Expanding the offensive capability of the ship to include a limited NSFS and strike capability is worthy of examination as an option to expand the striking power and flexibility of surface forces.

